

Sáttvika Áhára - सात्त्विक आहार

In yogic life, foods are divided into three categories: sáttvika, rájasika, and támasika.

Sáttvika foods: Good for body and mind.

Rájasika foods: Agitating effect on mind.

Támasika foods: Negative effect on both body and mind.

*Sáttvika foods: Fruits, vegetables, grains, beans.

**Rájasika foods: Coffee, tea, carbonated beverages.

***All támasika foods have a negative, degenerative effect on the mind. Most támasika foods have a negative, degenerative effect on the body as well: these include all products which are made from animals. Some foods of plant origin are in the támasika category; these have a negative effect on the mind only, not on the body. Támasika foods from plants include onion, garlic, mushroom, white brinjal (white eggplant), violet-colored carrots, red puni leaf, mustard greens (mustard seed is sáttvika; only the leaves of the plant itself are támasika), khesárii dál, masúr dál (an orange-colored lentil).

Foods to Take:

1. A human being should take only sáttvika foods.

2. Sáttvika food means whole plant foods: fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, nuts, seeds. “Whole” means that the food still appears the way it did when it was growing in the field.

Examples are fresh raw spinach, tomatoes; ripe bananas, grapes, mango, papaya; lentils and other beans; whole grain rice, quinoa; raw flax seeds, ground and added to one’s food, sprouts such as mung bean sprouts.

3. The main food for a sádhaka is fresh, live, raw fruits and vegetables.

- organic if available

4. Less grains and beans. Fine in limited quantity. But if one takes a cooked meal, it should not consist of a huge mountain of rice with a tiny bit of sabjii on the side.

Rather, it should be the opposite: a big mountain of vegetables, with a smaller amount of rice/beans on the side.

5. Nuts and Dried Fruits are fine, in limited quantities. These should not form a major part of one's caloric intake, but in limited amount they are fine to eat.

6. If one wishes to make cooked food, it should be steamed or boiled. Never fried, and never baked. Both of these latter modalities involve extremely high temperatures which changes the chemical structure of the oil, results in oxidation of the oil and production of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons which are carcinogenic i.e., known cancer-causing agents. Frying is the absolute worst cooking modality—the oil is itself harmful, and when heated to extreme temperatures for frying it is absolutely poisonous.

Foods to Avoid:

1. No onion, garlic, mushroom, or the other plant-based foods listed along with them at the beginning. These are all tāmāsika.

2. No salt, oil, sugar. These have zero nutritional benefit and rather cause harm proportional to the amount taken.

3. No coffee, tea, or carbonated drinks. These are rājasika.

4. No animal products (this means no dairy products, and no eggs).

Any product produced from an animal is not proper for human consumption. These are the main cause of all the chronic degenerative diseases seen in society: obesity, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, dementia, kidney disease including kidney insufficiency and kidney failure. All animal products (meat, fish, eggs, dairy) have the same nutritional profile.

5. No company products: if it has a list of ingredients, don't eat it.

Examples: biscuits, cookies, chips, all ready-made foods. Anything which a company makes should not be eaten. These are not living foods, not whole foods; as such, they are inherently very low in fiber, anti-oxidants, and phytochemicals (the thousands of health-supporting substances found in whole plant foods), and they contain all sorts of added chemicals which are harmful to humans or have never been tested for their effects on humans. There are literally thousands of chemicals made and utilized by the food industry, and these have never been tested

for their long-term effects on human health. The food industry does not have your welfare in mind; they are only in business to make money.

6. No restaurants. Why? Mind.

Mind interacts with the food when it is touched by human hands. The mental vibration of the person preparing the food affects the vibration of the food being made. If that person is a sádhaaka, i.e., someone following a yogic lifestyle, doing the sádhaná of Parama Puruśa, and is doing each and every action in their life to serve and please that Supreme Entity, then it is a different thing. But in a restaurant, it is not like that. People are working in the restaurant to make money, and the restaurant is a place of business. The food is not made with the ideation of love but rather with the ideation of earning money. As a result, the people interacting with the food in its preparation may be exhausted, angry, having other varieties of negative thoughts, may themselves drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, eat meat, and their crude vibration will affect the food they are preparing. As a result, rice and vegetables and be converted from a sáttvika food into a támasika food.

There are numerous other related risks of eating in restaurants. If it is a restaurant that cooks with onion, garlic, and mushroom, then even if you request none of these items in the meal you order, the utensils and pots the cooks use may have just been used with another item prior to making yours, which contained these very items. As a result, you'll be receiving onion/garlic/mushroom in your meal. Or even worse, if the restaurant prepares meat/eggs/dairy-based meals, then those items may also be likely getting into your food in the same way.

Swarup 2023

Note: Those taking a pure sáttvika diet with no animal products (and no dairy products) should take a vegan vitamin B12 supplement. Vitamin B12 is produced only by microorganisms and not by animals nor plants. Hence, those eating animal products can also become deficient in vitamin B12. However, the animal products people eat generally contain small amounts of vitamin B12 because vitamin B12-producing organisms reside in animals, mostly in their digestive tract. Those not taking any animal products are recommended to take a regular vegan vitamin B12 supplement. The daily vitamin B12 requirement is very small, about 2 micrograms per day. So, any vegan vitamin B12 supplement will be sufficient to meet the needs of a human being.